

## **AIRPORT AID GRANT PROGRAM UPDATE**

### **BRIEFING PAPER**

Prepared for the

### **JANUARY 2003 TRANSPORTATION COMMISSION MEETING**

Prepared by: Stan Allison, Manager, Aviation Operations, Aviation Division

Reviewed by: John Sibold, Director, Aviation Division

Approved by: Paula Hammond, Chief of Staff

#### **PURPOSE:**

The purpose of this briefing is to provide an update of activities and changes to the Aviation Division's Airport Aid Grant Program.

#### **BACKGROUND:**

In response to a series of internal WSDOT Audit Reports, a State Patrol Investigation and the JLARC Study (1998, 1999 and 2001), the Aviation Division sought to undertake a thorough review of its Airport Aid Program during CY 2002. The goal for the review was to develop a clear set of policies, procedures, and guidelines that could be applied in a consistent, equitable and transparent way when making grant funding decisions. The overriding objective was to ensure that the division followed all applicable state laws in the administration of its grant program as well as adopt and follow a set of sound business practices.

#### *Process:*

In May 2002, the State Aviation Division convened a task force composed of 15 different airport owner and operator representatives from the State of Washington's diverse aviation system. The membership represented a wide cross-section of airport owner types (from commercial service airports to very low activity rural general aviation airports) and airport management responsibilities (from elected officials to public works directors and pilots). The Task Force met six times between May and November of 2002. With the exception of the first meeting (held in Moses Lake), all meetings were held in Ellensburg, Washington. The mission of the Task Force was to develop a series of recommendations to be forwarded to the Aviation Division's Director that could provide clear policy direction and procedural guidance for effective administration of the Airport Aid Grant Program.

#### *Findings:*

The Task Force reviewed considerable material before arriving at its preliminary recommendations. It considered historical grant funding patterns, current grant program regulations and guidelines, information about the grant programs from other states, and a

variety of models that could potentially be used for guidance. In addition, the Task Force members each provided information about the interests of the types of airports they represent.

The State Aviation Division's Airport Aid Grant Program has existed since 1946. The current source of revenue for the grants provided by this program is a tax of \$.075 per gallon on general aviation fuel sold in the state of Washington. The funding level available has varied widely among biennia depending upon how much fuel has been sold and how many exemptions have been claimed. In the next biennium the projections are for fewer gallons of fuel sold on which to generate revenue and also a lower per gallon rate on aviation fuel (reduced from 7.5 to 7.0 (from \$0.075 to \$0.070) per gallon). Based on decreasing revenue projections, current revenue forecasts for the 2003-2005 biennium project only \$1.3 million will be available to the grant program. Of that amount, approximately \$220,000 per biennium is reserved for technical assistance and administration, further reducing the grant potential available to airports.

While there is very little historical documentation explaining why grants have been awarded to particular airports, or for particular projects, state grants have been awarded for a wide range of airport projects. Historically (over the last 6 biennia), about 65% of state grants have been for airport pavement, 7% for safety projects such as runway lighting and marking, and 28% for a variety of maintenance and operations projects. Forty-four percent of the grant funds have been awarded to small airports not typically eligible for federal funding, about 40% to airports that would be eligible for federal funding but generally do not receive it because of the federal grant prioritization process, about 6% to the very largest airports in the state, and the remainder to other airports not easily classified.

## **RECOMMENDATIONS:**

As a result of their work, the Task Force adopted the following policies. The policies are outlined in their final report, which has been submitted to the Aviation Division's Director, John Sibold, for his review and approval.

### Program Goals:

- The grant program should be flexible. Categories used to differentiate among airports and/or types of projects for funding should be considered guidelines and not fixed.
- A system for periodic review of the grant program should be established.
- The overall purpose of the state aviation grant program should be to increase the safety of the state's aviation system. Since the biggest component of safety at airports is the integrity of the runway surface, runway pavement should receive the highest priority in awarding grant funds.
- An objective scoring methodology should be developed to establish eligibility of projects for funding.

### Application Process:

- Grant applications should be accepted at any time but considered simultaneously during the annual grant selection process associated with the relevant funding cycle.

#### Allocation Methodology:

- The Division should allocate grant funds among airport applicants at its discretion, assuring that the ratios of funds to be used for the three project categories should be approximately 65% for pavement, 20% for other safety, and 15% for maintenance and operations, and that approximately fifty-five percent (55%) of the funds should be allocated to airports that are NPIAS GA, <20 based aircraft, non-NPIAS Stage I and non-NPIAS Stage II airports; and approximately forty-five percent (45%) allocated among all other airports.

Illustration: The table below reflects how this would affect funding to different categories if it were assumed that \$10 million were available over the next six biennia. *(note that dollar allocations would still be approximate, not exact)*

Type of Airport	Type of Project		
	Pavement 65%	Safety 20%	Maint, Security & Ops – 15%
All Other (48 airports) (45%)	29.25 % [\$ 2.925 million, or \$243,750 per year]	9% [\$900,000, or \$75,000 per year]	6.75 % [\$675,000, or \$56,250 per year]
NPIAS GA, airports w/<20 based aircraft, non-NPIAS Stage I and non-NPIAS Stage II airports (41 airports) (55%)	35.75 % [\$ 3.575 million, or \$297,916 per year]	11% [\$1.1 million, or \$91,666 per year]	8.25 % [\$825,000, or \$68,750 per year]

#### Minimum Requirements:

The grant applicant should have to meet all of the following requirements to be considered for a grant:

- Unless the grant requested is for development of a master plan or ALP, the project must be consistent with a current and valid Airport Master Plan and/or Airport Layout Plan.
- Comprehensive Plan and/or zoning regulations protect the airport from incompatible development or the airport can demonstrate it is actively pursuing inclusion in the comprehensive plan and development regulations.
- For NPIAS airports, if the project is FAA-eligible, the airport has to show that it has submitted an application for an FAA grant.
- Unless the grant would be used for performing an environmental review, for construction projects to be State-grant funded, the airport must have completed the environmental review.
- The airport sponsor will provide local matching funds for the project of no less than five percent (5%) of the project amount for which State grant funding is requested.
- The project supports the goals and interests of the WSDOT Aviation Division and the Washington State Aviation System Plan.

- Any land on which State grant funds are expended shall be in public ownership or perpetual easement; alternatively, there should be a bond that assures the State will be reimbursed its grant funds if the land reverts to another private entity.

Project Prioritization:

Projects that meet the minimum requirements should be categorized by airport type (per the table above) and then put into priority order according to the number of points each project receives using the scoring methodology adopted by the Task Force (outlined in the complete report).

Grant Standards and Assurances.

The following policy should be adopted by the Aviation Division for all grant applicants:

It shall be the policy of the WSDOT Aviation Division to require airport sponsors that are in the NPIAS, and eligible to receive federal funds, to meet appropriate Federal Aviation Administration design and construction standards for all *new* projects. If a NPIAS airport does not currently meet federal standards, the Division shall work with the sponsor to develop a plan for how they will, to the extent feasible, eventually meet those standards. The Division shall place a high priority on assisting airport sponsors with grant funds to meet the FAA's minimum safety standards. The WSDOT Aviation Division shall also encourage all Non-NPIAS airports to meet FAA standards for all future projects. However, when the WSDOT AD determines that this is not feasible or practical, the airport sponsor shall apply state standards as set forth in the WSDOT Aviation Division's *Airport Aid Grant Procedures* publication.

Note: The State Aviation Division has accepted an FAA grant to develop its own set of state airport design and construction standards. Once the standards have been developed, they will be included and published in the State's *Airport Aid Grant Procedures* booklet.

**NEXT STEPS:**

Aviation Division staff will be working over the next several months to develop specific procedures, state design standards and construction guidelines that will be used during the next grant award cycle. The material will be put together into an Airport Aid Grant Procedures Manual and will be disseminated to all airport sponsors prior to the next biennial grant cycle – during the Spring of 2003. The Division will then be prepared to accept new grant applications starting in May of 2003 and will announce the grant award recipients for 2003 with the onset of the new biennium on July 1, 2003.

WSDOT AVIATION DIVISION  
AIRPORT AID GRANT PROGRAM  
TASK FORCE MEMBERS

<b>Paul Bennett, P.E.</b>	Public Works Director <b><i>Kittitas County</i></b> (Bowers Field)
<b>Harlan Elsaesser</b>	Public Works Superintendent <b><i>City of Colville</i></b> (Colville Municipal Airport)
<b>Larry Hagan</b>	City Councilman <b><i>City of Tekoa</i></b> (Willard Field)
<b>Mary Hollis</b>	Finance Manager <b><i>City of Davenport</i></b> (Davenport Municipal Airport)
<b>Marv Kinney</b>	Asst. Executive Director/ Airport Director <b><i>Port of Benton</i></b> (Prosser & Richland Municipal Airports)
<b>Catherine Mitchell</b>	Asst. General Services Director <b><i>City of Tacoma</i></b> (Tacoma Narrows Airport)
<b>Jim Neva</b>	Port Manager <b><i>Port of Willapa Harbor</i></b> (Willapa Harbor Airport)
<b>Alan Paxhia</b>	Airport Commissioner <b><i>King County Airport District #1</i></b> (Vashon Island Airport)
<b>Jerry Richardson</b>	Chairman of the Executive Board <b><i>Washington State Community Airport Assn.</i></b> (Moses Lake Municipal)
<b>Jeff Robb</b>	Director of Aviation and Marine Services <b><i>Port of Port Angeles</i></b> (Wm. R. Fairchild International Airport)
<b>David Sypher, P.E.</b>	City Administrator/Engineer, <b><i>City of Chelan</i></b> (Chelan Municipal Airport)
<b>Gary Tomsic</b>	City Manager <b><i>City of Blaine</i></b> (Blaine Municipal Airport)
<b>John Townsley</b>	Secretary/Pilot <b><i>Okanogan Legion Airport Improvement Assn.</i></b> (Okanogan Legion Airport)
<b>Sheldon Tyler</b>	Executive Director <b><i>Port of Camas/Washougal</i></b> (Grove Field)
<b>Craig Ulleland</b>	Mayor <b><i>City of Ritzville</i></b> (Ritzville Municipal Airport)